

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers December 1, 2003

### At least 12 Dead in Holiday Weekend Crashes

An Oakland County man and his two young children were among at least 12 victims of Thanksgiving weekend traffic crashes on Michigan roads, state and local authorities say.

Brian W. Pietenpol, 34, his 5-year-old son Mitchell and 2-year-old daughter Abigail, all of Commerce Township, died after their minivan collided with a propane truck shortly after 11 a.m. Friday in Allegan County's Trowbridge Township.

They were wearing seat belts, but were ejected from the minivan and pronounced dead at the scene, sheriff's deputies said.

In other fatal holiday weekend crashes, police said:

\_Ryan L. Rice, 19, of Jackson was killed when the car he was driving crashed at 2:20 a.m. Sunday in Jackson County's Leoni Township. He was not wearing a seat belt.

\_Kelly R. Firby, 17 of Pontiac died after the car he was driving crashed at about 11:40 p.m. Friday in Oakland County's Independence Township. He was wearing a seat belt.

\_Yong H. Han, 82, of Wayne died after being hit by a vehicle about 6:20 p.m. Friday in his hometown.

\_Jessica L. Urbis, 23, of Marquette died after the car she was driving crashed at about 5:20 p.m.

Friday in Marquette County's Champion. She was wearing a seat belt.

\_A 20-year-old Owosso man and a 30-year-old Shafterburg man died after the vehicles they were driving collided about 4:45 p.m. Friday in Shiawassee County's Bennington Township. It was not known if the men, whose names were withheld pending notification of relatives, wore seat belts.

\_Megan C. Cronk of Cass City died when the car she was driving collided head-on with a pickup truck about 10:30 a.m. Friday on Michigan 81 in Saginaw County's Blumfield Township. Cronk, whose age was unavailable, was wearing a seat belt.

\_Verda Rodgers of Westland died after the car she was driving collided with a sport utility vehicle at 9:50 a.m. Friday in Livonia. Rodgers, whose age was not available, was wearing a seat belt.

\_Jose Alvarado, 46, of Saginaw died after being struck by a pickup truck about 11 p.m. Thursday in his hometown. The driver fled the scene.

The holiday reporting period began at 6 p.m. Wednesday and ran through midnight Sunday.

Last year, 20 people died in Thanksgiving holiday weekend crashes on Michigan roads.

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### 9 of 10 Holiday Travelers Use Personal Vehicle

According to a new report on National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) findings soon to be released by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), nine out of 10 Thanksgiving holiday travelers (about 91 percent) used personal vehicles - such as a car. Depending upon the distance traveled, these motorists have two very distinct travel patterns:

- For those traveling between 50 and 99 miles (44% of personal vehicle trips), more travel on Thursday than Wednesday, and more return on Saturday than Sunday.
- For those traveling at least 100 miles (56% of personal vehicle trips), trips are spread almost equally throughout the Wednesday-through- Sunday travel period.

More air, bus, and rail passengers travel on Wednesday than on Thursday.

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### Drivers Under 30 in Greatest Risk of Fall Asleep Crashes

Do you employ drivers under 30? Or do you have a family member or friend driving home for the holidays this season from college, a military or work assignment? Young drivers under age 30 have

the greatest risk for auto crashes and fatalities due to falling asleep at the wheel. This may be caused as much by the biology of sleep for young adults as by sleep deprivation and untreated sleep disorders. Particularly at risk are those who have stayed up long hours to complete work and who are anxious to "hit the road" and get home. Please advise them to sleep first, pull off the road at the very first sign of sleepiness and to use effective counter-measures such as switching to an alert driver, napping and having a caffeinated beverage or snack. **For activities, counter-measures and tips, visit the NSF website at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/activities/daaamain.cfm> and <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/ddsummit/ddhelp.cfm>.**

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### **UK Fleet Drivers Opting for Employee-Owned Vehicles are Saving Up to 12%**

U.K fleet drivers opting out of traditional company car schemes and into employee-owned vehicles are saving up to 12% on their insurance costs, new research has shown. Provecta Car Plan, which specializes in providing tax-efficient alternatives to company cars, carried out a survey into insurance costs for 3,000 employee-owned vehicles. The company said its results show the savings are down to reduced claims for accidents leading to reduced premiums, lower excesses and less management time spent processing claims. Provecta managing director, Nick Sutton said, "The reduction in accident damage is mainly down to the 'ethic of ownership'. There is a fundamental change to drivers' mind-set when the vehicle is their own. They have taken care to select the right car for them rather than having a benchmark car forced upon them and they automatically take more care of it – even if it is not a conscious decision. A car in good condition also gives drivers more options at the end of the contract."

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### **NTSB Releases Most Wanted Safety Recommendation List**

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has released its revised Most Wanted safety recommendations list. The list is designed to draw attention to those issues the NTSB believes will make the greatest impact on transportation safety. **For more information, visit <http://www.nts.gov/Recs/mostwanted/index.htm>.**

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### **NHTSA Reports on American Drivers' Behaviors toward Aggressive Driving**

The Gallup Organization conducted a national survey for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) from February through April of 2002 on American drivers' reported behaviors and attitudes surrounding speeding, aggressive driving, and other unsafe driving behaviors. **To view the final findings, visit [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/drowsy\\_driving1/speed\\_voIII\\_finding/SpeedVolumellFindingsFinal.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/speed_voIII_finding/SpeedVolumellFindingsFinal.pdf).**

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### **An Expert Panel Discusses EDR**

A panel of experts discussed Electronic Data Recorders (EDR), and while agreeing that the individual vehicle owners should also own the data, they agreed there are tremendous benefits to using that data. The panel included Kathleen A. Konicki, Director of Safety for Nationwide Insurance and Vice Chair of NETS; Michael S. Khoury, an attorney for Raymond & Prokop; Spl./Sgt. Timothy D. Brown of the Michigan State Police; Philip W. Haseltine, President of the Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety and. All four panelists gave short descriptions of their own industry's view of data recorders. **For the discussion from the experts visit, <http://www.itsa.org/itsnews.nsf/180c9c506bf5856985256c2d00174a12/0d9e7c511924e87885256de400194468?OpenDocument>.**

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### **AT&T Revamps Mobil Internet Service to Provide Motorists With Helpful Information**

AT&T Wireless Services Inc. has revamped its mobile Internet phone service with up-to-date traffic maps that warn drivers of congested routes and other features aimed at retaining customers. The service, which currently has 1 million customers, was redesigned to speed up the process of finding specific Internet information on mobile phones and to allow customers to get to their favorite sites in far fewer steps, the company said. **To view the AT&T news release visit,** [http://www.attwireless.com/press/releases/2003\\_releases/111903.jhtml](http://www.attwireless.com/press/releases/2003_releases/111903.jhtml).

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### **Guide for Moose-Vehicle Safety is in Development**

According to the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), about 80 people die in Sweden each year in collisions between automobiles and moose. A VTI report describes a method to crash test cars with a rubber moose dummy with the goal of eventually developing consumer guidance on the "moose safety" of a car model. **For more information, visit** <http://www.vti.se/PDF/reports/M955.pdf>.

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### **U.K. Research Found Drivers Using Hands-free Kits Make Up to 4 Times as Many Mistakes When Driving**

U.K. research has found drivers using hands-free kits make up to four times as many mistakes when driving, compared to motorists with no distractions. The AA research, which tested drivers using hands-free kits under controlled conditions, found that they became dangerously distracted while having a conversation. Although hands-free kits will not be included in the impending legislation on mobile phones due in less than two weeks, one legal expert believes it is the fleet executive's duty to make drivers aware of the dangers of driving while using such kits. The Government launched its national campaign on Monday in a bid to educate drivers on the forthcoming legislation. Radio advertisements are set to run for four weeks, with additional material appearing in the national press from December 1. **For more information, visit the AA website at** [http://www.theaa.com/aboutaa/features/fea\\_mobilephoneban\\_november2003.html](http://www.theaa.com/aboutaa/features/fea_mobilephoneban_november2003.html).

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### **NHTSA Released New Brochures on Driving with Medical Conditions**

NHTSA has released several new brochures on driving with medical conditions. One includes information about symptoms of seizures and how this condition may affect driving, suggested steps drivers could take to increase their driving safety if they have this condition, and relevant resources for such drivers. **For more information, visit** <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Seizures%20Web/index.htm> [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Seizures Web/index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Seizures%20Web/index.html). The second brochure addresses symptoms of diabetes and how this condition may affect driving, suggests steps drivers can take to increase their driving safety if they have this condition, and relevant resources for such drivers. **For more information, visit**

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/olddrive/Diabetes%20Web/index.html>.

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### **IIHS Issued Report Relating Increased Speed Limits to Increased Fatalities**

A recent report issued by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) says increased speed limits on Interstate highways led to nearly 1,900 deaths in 22 states from 1996 to 1999. The report, released on November 24, says people are adjusting to drive above the new limits. "What happens is if you raise the speed limits, people go faster," said Susan Ferguson, a top researcher at IIHS. "It's not that more people follow the law." In 1995, the federal government repealed its speed limits — 55 miles an hour, or 65 on rural Interstates — and sent authority back to the states. Twenty-eight states have raised rural Interstate speed limits to at least 70 miles an hour. The IIHS report has several components. It highlights a recent study by the Land Transport Safety Authority of New Zealand that focuses on 22 states that raised their limits to 70 or 75 m.p.h. almost immediately after the repeal of

the federal cap. Trends from those states are compared with trends in 12 states that kept their limits at 65. The study found 1,880 more deaths on the Interstates in those 22 states from 1996 to 1999. The finding appears to show that drivers in states with higher speed limits drive faster. **For more information, visit the IIHS website at <http://www.highwaysafety.org>.**

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### **New Auto Safety Standards to Reduce Deadly Fuel-fed Fires Triggered by Rear-Impact Collisions**

The U.S. government issued new auto safety standards recently to reduce the risk of potentially deadly fuel-fed fires triggered by rear-impact collisions. The upgrade, the first of its kind in nearly three decades, could force auto manufacturers to make fuel system or other design changes over several years at a cost of more than \$40 million annually. To improve vehicle designs to reduce the amount of fuel that is spilled in certain accidents, regulators are saying that passenger vehicles must pass tougher crash tests. For instance, speeds for rear-impact tests will rise from 30 mph to 50 mph and rear crash angles also will change to better reflect real-world scenarios. A side-impact test also will be upgraded to 33.5 mph from 20 mph. Fuel loss cannot exceed 1 ounce during impact, 5 ounces over the next five minutes, and 1 ounce during any one-minute period after that for the next 25 minutes.